Statement of Mandate 2015–2016

Agriculture

NOVA SCOTIA

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Message from the Minister

Our mandate is clear. The Department of Agriculture will help Nova Scotia's agricultural communities grow and develop the economy in 2015-2016. As outlined in the government's Throne Speech, we will support sector development in farming so that our exports increase and our domestic consumption grows.

One of our biggest opportunities in 2015, 2016 is our Growing Forward 2 bilateral agreement with the federal government. As we enter year three of that agreement, we will continue to invest in this strategic initiative programming. Growing Forward 2 programs focus on innovation, competitiveness and market development to ensure Canadian producers and processors have the tools and resources they need to continue to innovate and capitalize on emerging market opportunities.

As part of Growing Forward 2, we are supporting the health of our sheep flocks and beef producers so our farmers can produce top quality products. There are more than 300 registered farmers raising sheep in Nova Scotia and the industry is worth about $1.6 million. The beef industry is worth more than $28 million and we will provide beef producers in Nova Scotia with the support they need to remain competitive while growing their businesses.

The department will pay particular attention to the wine sector like never before. There are now 18 wineries in Nova Scotia in an industry that is just 30 years old. The newly created wine development board brings industry together with representatives from the departments of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism and Agriculture as well as the NS Tourism Agency. The synergy of these members will help us capitalize on one of Nova Scotia's fastest growing industries. Already, this board has facilitated valuable discussions among wine and grape experts in our province, and other Canadian wine regions, and we're making progress.

Some of the early actions and successes include amending the Tourist Attraction Signage Policy to remove barriers for new wineries, a viticulture specialist is being hired at Perennia Food and Agriculture in Truro and work towards a crop insurance coverage for grape growers is underway.

Through Perennia Food and Agriculture and our university partners, we will support innovation in Nova Scotia's food sector, and work to commercialize good ideas into tangible economic growth in Nova Scotia. We are seeking new research ideas to find innovative ways to lower cost of production or open up new markets for industries and new effective ways of doing traditional business.

Part of our new approach is to partner with Nova Scotia businesses to promote buy local. Select Nova Scotia and Sobeys are teaming up this year to celebrate and support local food and farmers with events across the province.

I invite you to continue reading our Statement of Mandate for more information on our priorities and plans in the year ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Honourable Keith Colwell, E.C.N.S.

Minister of Agriculture

Department Mandate

The Department of Agriculture supports the development of competitive, sustainable and profitable agriculture and agri-business industries that contribute to the economic, environmental and social prosperity of Nova Scotia's rural and urban communities.

The policy and corporate services division of the Department of Agriculture also supports the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture in developing competitive and profitable ocean products and recreational fishing industries.

Department Vision

The Department of Agriculture's vision is of an agriculture and agri-food industry that is diversified, market-focused and profitable.

It is an industry recognized for its adaptable, collaborative business approach and its safe, exceptional quality products.

Moreover, it is an industry valued for contributing to the economy, the environment and vibrant rural communities.

Department Mission

To foster prosperous and sustainable agriculture, food and agri-business industries through the delivery of quality public services for the betterment of rural communities and all Nova Scotians.

Our Strategic Outcomes

The strategic outcomes of the Department of Agriculture guide the efforts, programs and activities of department as a whole. These outcomes also provide fundamental guidance to help prioritize work for each branch, and the sections contained within, as well as the work of each departmental staff.

- **Functioning effectively under the allotted budget for the Department**
- **Diverse, innovative, competitive, and sustainable agriculture and agri-food industries**
- **Collaborative, market focused, and attractive business climate**
- **Safeguard agricultural resources, the environment, and rural economies**
- **Safe, responsible, and attractive agriculture and agri-food industries**
- **Reliable and highly qualified workforce**

Priorities of the Government of Nova Scotia

The Government of Nova Scotia has four key priorities:

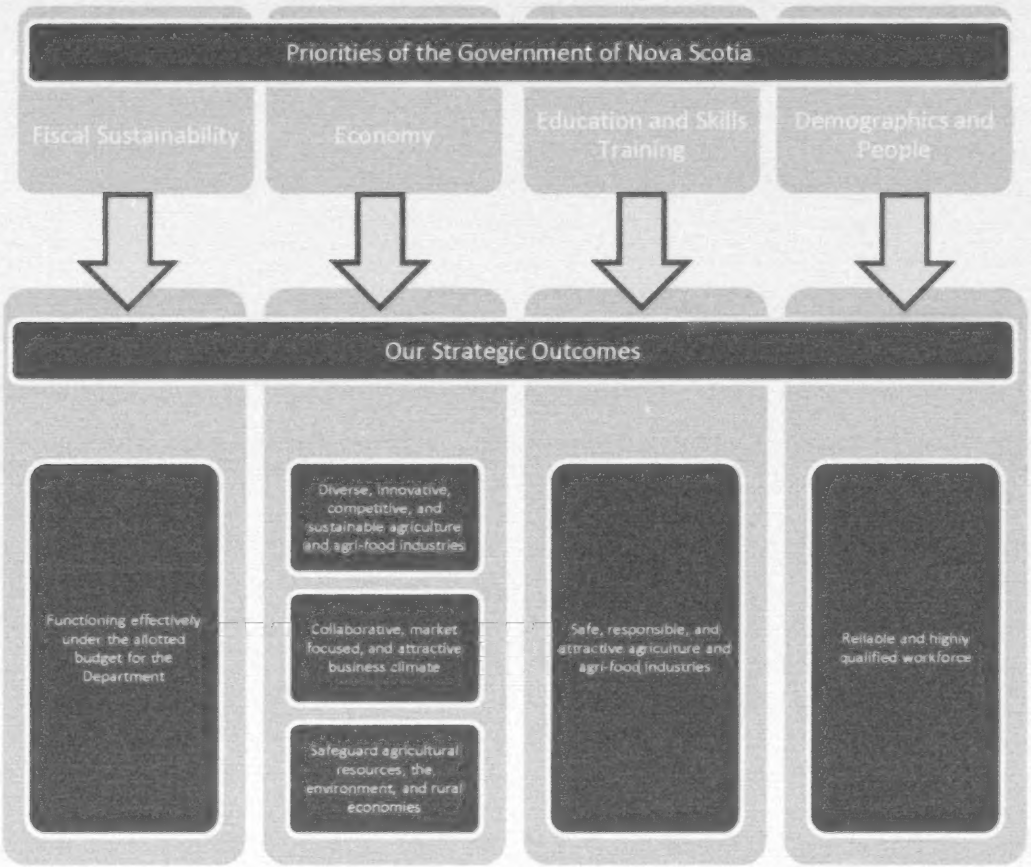
- ***Fiscal Sustainability*** **- Balance budget during mandate and achieve sustainable government.**
- ***Economy*** **- Create climate for private sector and social enterprise economic growth to support OneNS's economic goals.**
- ***Education and Skills Training*** **- Increase workforce participation and entrepreneurship by improving early childhood and P-12 education systems and continually improving opportunities for skill development and knowledge through post-secondary education, training and apprenticeship.**
- ***Demographics and People*** **- Increase net interprovincial in-migration and international immigration levels; enhance wellness & health initiatives; enhance workforce participation of youth, older workers and marginalized communities; and enhance communities and social well-being.**

Our Linkages with the Government Priorities

Our strategic outcomes guide the Department of Agriculture's efforts, programs and activities to pursue its' legislated mandate. The Department supports its mandate and aligns its resources to meet the higher priorities of government by focusing on fiscal sustainability, the economy, demographics and people, and education and skills training.

The linkages between these Government of Nova Scotia key priorities and the strategic outcomes of the Department are illustrated below in Figure #1. This figure represents the main relationships between these higher priorities and our strategic outcomes.

Figure #1: The linkages between the key priorities of Government and the strategic outcomes of the Department


Priorities of the Government of Nova Scotia
Fiscal Sustainability
Economy
Education and Skills Training
Demographics and People
Our Strategic Outcomes
Functioning effectively under the allotted budget for the Department
Diverse, innovative, competitive, and sustainable agriculture and agri-food industries
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Safe, responsible, and attractive agriculture and agri-food industries
Reliable and highly qualified workforce

Our Priority Areas Support Government Priorities

The priority areas of the Department of Agriculture are strategically designed to pursue our legislated mandate, while focusing on the higher priorities of government. Below our main priority areas, and their associated strategic actions, have been organized to show how they align with the higher priorities of Government and the strategic outcomes of the Department.

Focusing on Fiscal Sustainability

The following priority areas aim to balance the budget and achieve fiscal sustainability. These priority areas, and their associated strategic actions, support the government goal of "Balanced budget during mandate and achieve sustainable government."

Functioning Effectively Under the Allotted Budget for the Department

1. **A Balanced Budget** – Ensuring the Department operates within its allotted budget.
    - Monitor monthly budget forecasts.
    - Manage expenditures to meet budget allocations.
2. **A Cost-Recovery Approach** – Enhanced cost-recovery for services provided by the Department.
    - Adjustments are being made to the fee structures within the Food Handlers course, food establishment fees, and laboratory services as a result of program review recommendations. As a result, recoveries in these areas will increase by $705,000 in 2015-2016.

Focusing on the Economy

The following priority areas are focused on creating conditions that promote economic growth. These priority areas, and their associated strategic actions, support the government goal: "Create climate for private sector and social enterprise economic growth to support OneNS economic goals."

Diverse, Innovative, Competitive, and Sustainable Agriculture and Agri-food Industries

1. **A Diversified Industry** – Diversification is important to the long-term sustainability of the Nova Scotia agri-food sector. It creates a reliance on many, rather than few, types of

businesses and business models, can help stabilize financial returns, and provide a range of products to a wide range of markets.

- Promote the growth of sectors such as wine, apples, mink and blueberries.
- Support diversification through business and industry development programs under Growing Forward II and key business development services across the province.
- Explore the potential to expand trade opportunities and take advantage of recently negotiated trade agreements with the European Union.
- Pursue the significant opportunities in the Asian marketplace including China, South Korea, and South East Asia.
- Partner with other departments, agencies, and federal partners to develop strategic plans to pursue market and product opportunities.

2. **Innovative, Entrepreneurial and Competitive Businesses** - Enhanced business acumen, adaptability and entrepreneurial capacity of industry players should help to advance the competitiveness and profitability of the industry.

- Focus on innovation and quality programming under Growing Forward II and support the start-up of agri-food businesses located at the Innovation Centre of Perennia Food and Agriculture Inc.
- Working with entrepreneurs and new food service start-ups to ensure that food safety protocols are implemented in their production practices.
- Develop a Business Acceleration program under Growing Forward II to help existing small-scale farms become more profitable and environmentally sustainable by helping them take advantage of market growth opportunities and transition to a more efficient scale of production.
- Implement the requirement that client applications include a business plan showing how they have a positive economic impact on communities within Nova Scotia.

Collaborative, Market Focused, and Attractive Business Climate

3. **Collaborative Value Chains that are Informed, Adaptive and Market Focused** - Building a value-added, customer focused, and integrated value chain approach to business can lead to improved competitive offerings and increased customer satisfaction.

- Support the Building Industry Capacity Program commencing in the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Funding will support sector level strategic development and implementation initiatives and assist in building the strategic infrastructure needed to address barriers to development in Nova Scotia's agriculture and agri-food industry.

- Support the valued Nova Scotia foodservice sector to help ensure safe and quality foods are provided by profitable and sustainable foodservice businesses.

- Value Chain Development and Extension/Outreach teams assist in the incubation of value-added products starting at the farm level and helping with product development within the restaurant and retail settings.

- Develop a new marketing program under Growing Forward II to encourage the agriculture and agri-food industry to expand their market share and foster economic growth and job creation by accessing new and emerging markets, retaining and expanding existing markets, and developing and marketing value-added products that meet buyer demand.

4. **Attractive and Favorable Business Climate** - Working with other key stakeholders and regulators, the Department can maximize the attractiveness of the Nova Scotia business climate for development opportunities.

    - Improve the legislative and regulatory framework and adapt programs to ensure that provincial investments are focused on jobs and growth within competitive, sustainable, and profitable agriculture and agri-business industries.

    - In partnership with the Federal government, the department offers an effective suite of Business Risk Management Programs which includes AgriInvest, AgriStability, AgriInsurance and AgriRecovery to help farmers manage risk from severe market volatility and disaster situations.

Safeguard Agricultural Resources, the Environment, and Rural Economies

5. **Protecting and Preserving Agriculturally Important Land and Landscapes Essential to the Public Interest** - Ensuring future generations of agri-business can benefit from these resources and help the province achieve its objective of resource stewardship.

    - Invest annually in the protection and maintenance of 241 kilometers of dykes and 260 aboiteau structures, which protects 17,400 hectares (43,000 acres) of land.

    - Take additional measures guided by the Protecting and Preserving Agricultural Land in Nova Scotia Policy Framework to preserve and protect agricultural land.

6. **Environmentally Responsible, Aware and Focused Industries** – Promote and support environmental stewardship for long-term sustainability of agriculture and its environment.

   - Invest annually in several environmental management programs under Growing Forward II that both educate and support implementation of environmental best management practices on farm. These programs improve productivity and ensure land is available for future generations.

   - The Bioproducts Program supports and demonstrates the use of innovative opportunities in agriculture and supports implementation of the jointly developed FPT Bioproducts Roadmap.

7. **Agriculture as an Economic and Social Base in Rural Communities** - Use and promote agriculture as a stabilizing and integrating force to help maintain rural communities through employment, procurement spending, and social engagement (volunteerism and community leadership).

   - Invest annually to support Agricultural Awareness and Select Nova Scotia programs and other initiatives that increase public awareness and appreciation for Nova Scotia agriculture and its broad range of benefits and intrinsic qualities.

   - Support initiatives that encourage greater local food production and consumption such as increasing awareness of local food products and increasing the supply of local food by retailers.

Focusing on Education and Skills Training

The following priority areas focus on promoting a greater human capacity within Nova Scotia. These priority areas, and their associated strategic actions, support the government goal of "Increase workforce participation and entrepreneurship by improving early childhood and P-12 education systems and continually improving opportunities for skills development and knowledge through post-secondary education, training and apprenticeship."

Safe, Responsible, and Attractive Agriculture and Agri-food Industries

1. **Supporting Skills Development, New Knowledge, and Technology Transfer** – Creating opportunities for skills development, research and innovation, and adoption of new technology.

- Enhance business skills and training by adapting current services and programs to better support profitability and growth in business and employment opportunities in rural Nova Scotia.

- Through our annual grant to Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus in Bible Hill and enhanced partnerships with other academic institutions, the province is helping to ensure a continued focus on agricultural and food innovation, promote industry-led research, and improve knowledge and technology transfer between academia and industry.

2. **Raising Awareness and Knowledge of Agriculture in Nova Scotia** - Providing educational programming and resources for the general public and students in the Nova Scotia P-12 school system.

    - Offering school programs such as Agriculture in the Classroom, Canadian Ag Literacy Week, Farmer for a Day, School Garden Project, Science Fair Awards, Amazing AGzone Race, and Scientists and Innovators in the Schools (SITS).

    - Co-ordinate and deliver Agricultural Awareness projects to promote a positive image of agriculture to encourage understanding and appreciation of farming in Nova Scotia and encourage Nova Scotians to consider a career in agriculture.

    - Continue to work with students that apply for Grade 10 Personal Development Credit through their involvement in 4-H. 4-H members that receive a gold completion certificate for this program and present it to the school guidance counsellor will receive school credit.

    - Partner with the Select Nova Scotia campaign and with the ThinkFARM programs to allow Nova Scotians to build real connections with the farm community and to help encourage consumer loyalty for local products and help build interest in agricultural careers.

3. **Healthy and Safe Industry Working Practices** - Minimize workplace injuries that include financial and social costs, for which some cannot be fully compensated, and make agriculture a more attractive industry in which to work.

    - Support the improvement of farm safety by promoting health and safety awareness through Farm Safety Nova Scotia.

    - Continue to promote the importance of food safety knowledge to all involved in food preparation by providing a leadership role in food safety training delivery.

- Support the valued Nova Scotia foodservice sector through ongoing consultation, education, compliance-audits and enforcement to help food establishments provide safe food for their customers.

- Offer Food Hygiene (Handling) courses for workers who handle and work with food regularly to instill proper food handling and preparation and to help prevent food-borne illnesses.

4. **Protecting the Health of Nova Scotians** – Ensuring the safety of our food supply.

    - Provide a strong regulatory framework with enforcement mechanisms to ensure a safe food supply for all Nova Scotians and is strengthening this framework with current focus in meat inspection and cheese processing.

Focusing on Demographics and People

The following priority areas focus on promoting a stronger workforce within Nova Scotia. These priority areas, and their associated strategic actions, support the government goal of "Increase net interprovincial in-migration and international immigration levels; enhance wellness & health initiatives; enhance workforce participation of youth, older workers and marginalized communities; and enhance communities and social well-being."

Reliable and Highly Qualified Workforce

1. **Promoting Highly Qualified Workforce and Entrepreneurs** – Attracting and developing a diversified group of highly qualified entrepreneurs and employees within agriculture.

    - Provide an annual grant to Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus to support the training of both domestic and international students who can become the next generation of leaders in the agri-food sector in Nova Scotia.

    - Support the Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus in training international students in agricultural studies which can create an opportunity to retain the best and brightest immigrants in this sector.

2. **Supporting New Entrants and Entrepreneurship** – Providing the needed resources to help start agri-businesses.

    - Attract new entrepreneurs to agriculture and food related ventures, nurture their entrepreneurial capacity, and accelerate their competitive position in the marketplace through the THINKFARM program.

- Assist existing farmers in the transition to new farm or agri-business enterprises through the THINKFARM program.

- Facilitate access to information, programs, services and regulations that apply to farm businesses, put farmers in touch with experts within and outside the Department, and conduct and support outreach and training activities to improve the knowledge and skills of beginning and transitioning farmers through the THINKFARM program.

3. **Targeting Under-represented Groups in Agriculture** – Providing the tools needed to start or grow a farm or operate an agri-business.

    - Support the development of agriculture in African Nova Scotian and First Nation Communities across Nova Scotia through the Agriculture Awareness, THINKFARM, and 4-H Rural Leadership programs and partner with stakeholders to advance agriculture and agri-food businesses in these communities.

Our Performance Measures

Our performance measures are used to show how the strategic actions of the Department are making progress towards our strategic outcomes and that of the higher priorities of Government. Table #1 below illustrates the linkages among the key priorities of Government and the Department's strategic outcomes, priority areas, and performance measures. The performance measures show how the Department fulfills its mandate through their current values, short-term targets, and their trends and long-terms targets.

Table #1: Linkages among the key priorities of Government and the Department's strategic outcomes, priority areas, and performance measures

Government Priority	Our Strategic Outcome	Our Priority Area	Measure	Current Value	Short-term Target	Trends and Long-term Targets
Fiscal sustainability	Functioning effectively under the allotted budget for the department	• A balanced budget • A cost-recovery approach	• Balancing the budget	294,000	0	Decreasing discrepancy between the estimated and actual values of total gross departmental expenses in the budget. The goal is to maintain a balanced budget over the long-term.
Economy	Diverse, innovative, competitive, and sustainable agriculture and agri-food industries	• A diversified industry • Innovative, entrepreneurial and competitive businesses	• Total farm cash receipts	$593 million	$560 million	Farm cash receipts have recovered from the recession lows, however mink exports have fallen. The long-term target is continued increase in farm cash receipts.
			• Total agri-food exports, less seafood products and fishing	$310 million	$341 million	Agri-food exports have been on the rebound from the worldwide recession in 2010. The 10 year target, adopted by the ONE NS Commission, is to double agricultural exports by 2024 (Goal 15).
			• Agriculture labour productivity (1997=100)	147.40 Estimated	149.96	Growth in agricultural output along with a decline in labour hours resulted in a 37% increase in productivity from 1997 to 2013. In recent years, productivity has declined, falling 5% from 2010 to 2013. The short-term target is to achieve annual productivity growth in 2014 and 2015 of 7.8% and 1.9%, respectively. Increasing agriculture labour productivity and continuing to improve production efficiencies is the long-term target.

Government Priority	Our Strategic Outcome	Our Priority Area	Measure	Current Value	Short-term Target	Trends and Long-term Targets
Economy	Diverse, innovative, competitive, and sustainable agriculture and agri-food industries	• A diversified industry • Innovative, entrepreneurial and competitive businesses	• Agri-food processing labour productivity (1997=100)	79.01 Estimated	80.59	From 1997 to 2013 agri-food processing labour productivity declined 22%. Output has fallen 16 %, most likely due to plant closures. However, labour hours have increased, which suggests growth in less productive processing activities. The short-term target is to achieve a 2% annual productivity growth rate for 2014 and 2015. Reversing the current downward trend in agri-food processing labour productivity is the long-term target.
	Collaborative, market focused, and attractive business climate	• Collaborative value chains that are informed, adaptive and market focused • Attractive and favorable business climate	• % Farm revenues protected through AgriInvest	68%	70%	The percentage of farm revenues protected through AgriInvest has been steadily increasing over the past three fiscal years. The long-term target is to progressively increase the share of sector farm margin protected through AgriInvest.
			• % Farm revenues protected through AgriStability	45%	50%	The percentage of farm revenues protected through AgriStability has been steadily increasing over the past three fiscal years. Progressively increasing percentage of sector farm revenue protected through AgriStability is the long-term target.
			• Total production crop insurance coverage	161.40	165.0	Insurance coverage decreased last year from the previous year, but is expected to increase in the next fiscal year. The long-term target is to increase total production crop insurance coverage.

Government Priority	Our Strategic Outcome	Our Priority Area	Measure	Current Value	Short-term Target	Trends and Long-term Targets
Economy	Safeguard agricultural resources, the environment, and rural economies	• Protecting and preserving agriculturally important land and landscapes essential to the public interest • Environmentally responsible, aware and focused industries • Agriculture as an economic and social base in rural communities	• Local food consumption	17% Estimated	20%	In 2011-2012 (the benchmark year), this measure showed 13% of money spent on food by Nova Scotians being spent on locally produced food. To date, there has been a steady increasing trend toward the long-term goal of 20% by 2020.
			• Local food production	2,550	2,736	The number of farms registered in Nova Scotia has been declining since the benchmark year. Focus on continuing to provide support to encourage local food production will help to achieve the long-term goal of increasing the number of local farms by 5% by 2020, relative to the number of local farms in 2012.
Education and skills training	Safe, responsible, and attractive agriculture and agri-food industries	• Supporting skills development, new knowledge, and technology transfer • Raising awareness and knowledge of agriculture in Nova Scotia • Healthy and safe industry working practices • Protecting the health of Nova Scotians	• Permits issued for food establishments	6,216	6,250	The number of permits issued for food establishments increased, however, the number of warnings increased and the number of closures remained constant during the past two fiscal years. The goal is to reverse the trend and realize a decrease in the number of warnings for and closures of food establishments in the foodservice sector in the long-term.
			• Warnings issued	44	40	
			• Closures of food establishments	4	3	
			• Animals inspected or processed	158992	165000	The number of animals inspected or processed and the number of audits decreased during the past two fiscal years. The goal is to reverse the trend and increase the number of animals inspected or processed and the number of audits in the long-term.
			• Audits conducted	113	115	

Government Priority	Our Strategic Outcome	Our Priority Area	Measure	Current Value	Short-term Target	Trends and Long-term Targets
Demographics and people	Reliable and highly qualified workforce	• Promoting highly qualified workforce and entrepreneurs • Supporting new entrants and entrepreneurship	• Employment in agriculture	4550	5000	There has been a general decline in agriculture employment over time due to increased labour productivity. From 1995 to 2014 employment has dropped by 22.7%. The long-term goal is to attract and maintain a workforce that meets the needs of the industry.
		• Targeting under-represented groups in agriculture	• Employment in agri-food processing	3589	4000	Agri-food processing employment has declined 39% since 2004 due to major plant closures. Prior to 2004 employment was on the rise, increasing 29% from 1995 to 2004. The long-term goal is to attract and maintain a workforce that meets the needs of the industry.

Budget Context

	2014-15 Estimate ($thousands)	2014-15 Forecast ($thousands)	2015-16 Estimate ($thousands)
Senior Management	513	641	685
Policy and Corporate Services	42,780	55,817	43,729
Agriculture and Food Operations	17,675	16,669	17,122
Total Gross Departmental Expenses	**60,968**	**73,127**	**61,536**
Additional Information			
Fees and Other Charges	(1,663)	(1,533)	(2,204)
Ordinary Recoveries	(6,262)	(4,610)	(5,976)
TCA Purchase Requirements	5,835	5,246	2,040
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	215.6	197.0	212.2